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ABSTRACT

A comparison of the motivational orientations of adult and vocational education graduates was made to determine the motivation for nontraditional students' participation in the off-campus credit programs leading to a master's degree at Marshall University (West Virginia). The population for this study consisted of all 319 vocational-technical education (VTE) master's degree recipients and all 68 adult education (AE) master's degree recipients who participated in off-campus degree programs at the university. Data were collected through a mailed survey that used a Likert-like scale to rank six factors: social contact, social stimulation, professional advancement, community service, external expectations, and cognitive interest as motivators. A total of 175 usable responses (55 percent) was received from the VTE graduates and 38 responses (56 percent) from the AE graduates after initial mailing and follow-up. Most respondents were women and more than 90 percent were white. The study showed that both groups indicated that the factor "professional advancement" was the greatest motivator for them to enroll in adult and vocational education courses, with cognitive interest the next most important factor. Recommendations were made to attract more nonwhite students into the program, to improve social contact between participants and professors, to develop courses with a high degree of intellectual stimulation, and to be aware of the importance of professional advancement to program participants. (Contains 10 references.) (KC)

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COMPARISON OF THE MOTIVATIONAL ORIENTATIONS OF ADULT EDUCATION GRADUATES AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION GRADUATES IN OFF-CAMPUS CREDIT PROGRAMS

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Comparison of the Motivational Orientations of Adult Education Graduates and Vocational Education Graduates in Off-Campus Credit Programs

by Howard R. D. Gordon

A comparison of the motivational orientations of adult and vocational education graduates was made to determine the motivation for participation in off-campus credit programs. Both groups indicated that the factor "professional advancement" was the greatest motivator for them to enroll in adult and vocational education courses. The results of this study suggest that the equity movement has brought about important changes in the motivation for participation of female students in adult and vocational education.

Introduction

A bold initiative was undertaken in the mid-sixties at Marshall University in West Virginia. A master of science degree program with a state-wide mission was conceptualized in a cooperative arrangement between the West Virginia Department of Education and Marshall University. Faculty were employed in 1969 to provide direction in the development and implementation of the new M.S. degree program in Vocational and Adult Education.

Selected specializations, certificate programs, and courses were added to supplement the original M.S. degree program. An M.S. degree in Adult Education was subsequently developed in 1973.

In 1972, seven students earned their master's degrees in vocational education. During the years 1972 through 1991 a total of eight hundred and eleven (811) students successfully completed masters degrees through the Department of Vocational and Adult Education. All but a few students completed their degrees while employed on a full-time basis.

The off-campus credit programs were developed to serve vocational and adult education (VAE) students who are unable to come to the Marshall University campus. The success and continuation of these programs is dependent upon student participation. Hone (1984) found that the common denominator for success of rural post-secondary education programs is to directly address the needs and expectations of the program participants. To promote program development, Christmas (1990) points out a need for identification of factors that motivate adults to participate in agricultural education programs.

Miller and Crawford (1990) indicated that the factor "Cognitive Interest" was the greatest motivator for participants to enroll in off-campus courses. Data from Miller and Crawford's (1990) study also revealed that the factor "Professional Advancement" was rated significantly higher by the off-campus participants when compared with the normative group in their study.

According to Boshier and Collins (1983), a persistent theme in motivational orientation research concerns the structure of "motives" for participation based on variables in the life cycle (age, sex, etc.) and socio-economic domains. Researchers have also shown a marked interest in participation and enrolling in credit classes (Johnston and Rivera, 1965; London, Wenkert, and Hagstron, 1963).

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to determine the motivation for participation in off-campus credit programs. The specific objectives of this study were to:

a. Describe and compare demographic characteristics regarding vocational and adult education (VAE) graduates.

b. Identify and compare the motivational orientations of VAE graduates and their level of influence to enroll in off-campus credit courses.

c. Determine and compare the level of influence selected variables had on the motivational orientations of VAE graduates to enroll in off-campus credit courses.

Significance of the Study

A study of this nature is of primary importance to the success of programs involving non-traditional university enrollees. Knowing what motivates people to enroll and participate is central to the programs, not only in terms of obtaining initial enrollees, but also in terms of how to retain and better serve the population.

Limitations of the Study

Because of the scant research data available on motivational factors associated with enrollment in such programs, this study sought to develop important baseline data. Thus the entire population of VAE graduates were surveyed. Consequently, the data does not lend themselves to tests of statistical significance.

Research Procedures

This study utilized descriptive research methodology. Gay (1981, p. 12) summarized the purpose of descriptive research as research that "determines and reports the way things are." Applied research studies are best characterized as those which concentrate on educational methodology and structure as they appear in practice (Borg and Gall, 1983). The ultimate goal of applied research is to be of direct utility to practicing educators.

Population The population for this study consisted of all (N=319) Vocational and (N=68) Adult Education master's degree recipients, for the years 1982-1991, who participated in off-campus degree programs in VAE at Marshall University. Sampling procedures were not utilized since the entire population was surveyed. The annual Marshall University Commencement Program for the academic years from

1982-1991 were used to identify the population and served as the database for the study. Names and last known addresses of graduates were obtained from the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies, Records & Research, and the Department Chair for VAE.

Instrumentation An information sheet was developed by the researchers to collect demographic and situational data. In order to insure content validity, the information sheet was reviewed by a panel of judges selected from higher education institutions. The Education Participation Scale (EPS) (Boshier, 1982) was used to determine the motivational orientation of the participants. The (EPS) is a 40 item scale scored on a four point Likert-type basis (No Influence=1; Little Influence=2; Moderate Influence=3; Much Influence=4). The items are divided into six factors with factor reliability estimates ranging from alpha of 0.80 to alpha of 0.88. The six factors are:

a. Social Contact: Reflects a desire to develop or improve one's relationship with other people.

b. Social Stimulation: Reflects a need to find intellectual stimulation as an escape from routine or frustration situations.

c. Professional Advancement: Reflects a need to improve occupational status or performance.

d. Community Service: Reflects a selfless concern for other people. Many times reflected by a desire to participate in community affairs.

e. External Expectations: Reflects the presence of pressure to participate in educational activities from another person or circumstances.

f. Cognitive Interest: Reflects the view of learning as a way of life and the belief in the concept of learning for the sake of learning.

Appropriateness and permission of the use of this instrument for this study was discussed with the author.

Data Collection Data were collected between February 12, 1992 and April 30, 1992. All 387 (VAE) graduates identified were sent a cover letter, an information sheet and an EPS instrument. After the initial mailing and two follow-up mailings, a total of 175 responses (55%) had been received from the vocational graduates and 38 responses (56%) from the adult education graduates. All returns received one week or later after the first follow-up mailing were classified as late respondents. A non-response bias procedure, the early/late response approach as described by (Miller and Smith, 1983), was used to determine non-response bias in their response to each question. No significant differences were found.

Analysis of Data Data were analyzed using Lotus 1-2-3 and Harvard Graphics (version 2.3). Percentages, comparison of means and standard deviations were used to describe the data.

Findings

Demographic Characteristics of Participants Findings reported in this subsection were generated from the Information Sheet of the instrument packet.

Over 15% of the adult education participants came from communities of 5,000 - 25,000 as compared to over 30% of the vocational education participants. (Figure 1).

Insert Figure 1 about here

A total of 149 (Adult Education = 28 and Vocational Education = 121) of the respondents were female and 64 (Adult Education = 10 and Vocational Education = 54) were male. Twenty-six percent of the adult education respondents completed their M.S. degree within the age category of 35-39 years as displayed in Figure 2. For vocational education respondents, 31% completed their M.S. degree within the age category of 30-34 years old.

Insert Figure 2 about here

The ethnic makeup consisted of over 90% whites for both adult and vocational education respondents.

Participation Motivation

This subsection includes findings derived from the EPS. The second objective of this study was to identify and compare the motivational orientations of VAE graduates and their level of influence to enroll in off-campus credit courses.

The EPS contains forty questions cast with a four-point response scale. These questions were then factored in a large scale empirical test (Boshier and Collins, 1983). Six factors were identified. They are: (a) Social Contact, (b) Social Stimulation, (c) Professional Advancement, (d) Community Service, (e) External Expectations, and (f) Cognitive Interest. Scoring of the instrument followed using the guidelines provided by the author of the EPS.

Table 1 details the mean factor ratings and standard deviations for adult and vocational education graduates. "Professional Advancement" was given the highest rating by both groups with a mean score of 2.98 (standard deviation = 0.48) for adult education respondents. For vocational education respondents the mean score for "Professional Advancement" was 3.14 (standard deviation = 0.42). "Cognitive Interest" was of next greatest importance for both groups. For adult education respondents, the mean score for "Cognitive Interest" was 2.57 (standard deviation = 0.79) as compared to 2.36 (standard deviation = 0.78) for vocational education respondents. "Social Contact", Social Stimulation", and "External Expectations" were rated as "No Influence" by both groups.

Insert Table 1 about here

Influence of Selected Variables on Participation Motivation

This subsection also includes findings derived from the EPS. The third objective of this study was to determine and compare the level of influence that selected variables had on the motivational orientations of VAE graduates to enroll in off-campus credit courses.

Table 2 shows mean comparisons of factors by gender for adult and vocational education respondents. The mean ratings of factors for vocational education male and female respondents were higher for "Professional Advancement" when compared with adult education respondents. "Community Service" and "Cognitive Interest" were rated as "Little Influence" by male and female respondents in both groups. "Social Contact", "Social Stimulation", and "External Expectations", were rated as "No Influence" by both groups.

Insert Table 2 about here

Table 3 reflects the means comparisons of factors by age at which both groups (VAE) completed their M.S. degree.

"Professional Advancement" was given the highest rating with a mean score of 3.19 (standard deviation = 0.34). This rating came from vocational education respondents who completed their degree within the 30-34 years old category. "Cognitive Interest" was of next greatest importance with a mean score of 2.89 (standard deviation = 0.30). This rating was revealed by adult education respondents who completed their degree within the 40-44 years old category. "External Expectations" had "Little Influence" on adult education respondents who had completed their degree within the 40-44 years and 45-49 years age

category. Vocational education respondents who had completed their degree within the 50-54 years age category had a mean rating of 2.08 for the "External Expectations" factor. "Social Contact" and "Social Stimulation" were rated as "No Influence" by both groups.

Insert Table 3 about here

Discussion and Conclusions

A comparison of the motivational orientations of adult and vocational education graduates was made to determine the motivation for participation in off-campus credit programs. Off-campus courses were available to both adult and vocational education respondents who resided in most counties in the State of West Virginia while pursuing their M.S. degree. This is an indication that Marshall University offered courses throughout the state in an effort to meet its state-wide mission. Both adult and vocational education respondents were quiet homogeneous in that most were women from a community of 5,000 - over 25,000. Vocational education respondents were more inclined to complete their M.S. degree at a younger age when compared to adult education respondents. The ethnic makeup of both groups consisted of over 95% white students. This is an indication that nonwhite graduates were under-represented in the off-campus credit programs.

Both groups indicated that the factor "Professional Advancement" was the greatest motivator for them to enroll in courses. This factor reflects a need to improve occupational status or performance.

"Cognitive Interest" was also highly rated by both groups relative to the other factors. This indicated that participants are interested in learning and the belief of learning for the sake of learning in regards to a specific topic or concept.

The mean rating of the "Professional Advancement" factor for females in both groups was higher when compared to their male counterparts. With regards to gender, vocational education females had a higher mean rating for the "Professional Advancement" factor when compared to adult education participants. The results of this study suggest that the equity movement has brought about important changes in the motivation for participation of female students in adult and vocational education.

Motivation due to "External Expectations" had a rating between "No Influence" and "Little Influence" for both groups who had completed their degree within selected age categories (40-44 years, 45-59 years, and 50-54 years). This could be attributed to continuing education activities encouraged or imposed, by employees upon adult and vocational education professionals.

Recommendations

Based on findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are suggested:

a. Continued effort is needed to attract more nonwhite students into this program.

b. "Social Contact" between participants and professors/instructors should be encouraged.

c. Courses should be developed which allow for a high degree of interaction/intellectual stimulation.

d. Program planners should be aware of the importance of "Professional Advancement" and "Cognitive Interest" and their impact upon motivation for participation.

e. The data reported in this study should serve as a basis from which to compare similar respondents in future studies.

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TABLE 1

Factor Means and Standard Deviations of
Adult and Vocational Education Graduates

Factor	Adult Education N=38		Vocational Education N=175	
	$\bar{X}^a$	SD	$\bar{X}^a$	SD
Social Contact	1.60	0.50	1.48	0.44
Social Stimulation	1.54	0.44	1.41	0.41
Professional Advancement	2.98	0.48	3.14	0.42
Community Service	2.08	0.67	2.12	0.73
External Expectations	1.76	0.64	1.80	0.63
Cognitive Interest	2.57	0.79	2.36	0.78

[a] Scale values: No Influence = 1; Little Influence = 2; Moderate Influence = 3; Much Influence = 4.

Table 2

Means Comparisons of Factors by Gender for Adult and Vocational Education Graduates

	Gender			
	G1		G2	
	Males n=10	Females n=28	Males n=54	Females n=121
Factor	M* / SD	M* / SD	M* / SD	M* / SD
Social Contact	1.57 / 0.46	1.60 / 0.51	1.58 / 0.49	1.43 / 0.42
Social Stimulation	1.47 / 0.41	1.57 / 0.46	1.48 / 0.42	1.38 / 0.40
Professional Advancement	2.80 / 0.42	3.04 / 0.48	3.06 / 0.47	3.18 / 0.40
Community Service	2.27 / 0.74	2.02 / 0.62	2.10 / 0.70	2.12 / 0.73
External Expectations	1.97 / 0.68	1.69 / 0.62	1.72 / 0.52	1.82 / 0.68
Cognitive Interest	2.37 / 0.83	2.63 / 0.77	2.32 / 0.80	2.34 / 0.76

G1 = Adult Education Graduates. G2 = Vocational Education Graduates.
M = Mean. SD = Standard Deviation.
* = Scale values: No Influence = 1; Little Influence = 2; Moderate Influence = 3; Much Influence = 4.

Table 3

Means Comparisons of Factors by Age for Adult and Vocational Education Graduates

Factor	Age											
	25-29 yrs		30-34 yrs		35-39 yrs		40-44 yrs		45-49 yrs		50-54 yrs	
	G1 n=5	G2 n=24	G1 n=9	G2 n=55	G1 n=10	G2 n=37	G1 n=6	G2 n=24	G1 n=4	G2 n=15	G1 n=4	G2 n=14
	M* / SD	M* / SD	M* / SD	M* / SD	M* / SD	M* / SD	M* / SD	M* / SD	M* / SD	M* / SD	M* / SD	M* / SD
Social Contact	1.97 / 0.54	1.40 / 0.44	1.67 / 0.52	1.40 / 0.40	1.59 / 0.41	1.56 / 0.47	1.40 / 0.38	1.47 / 0.43	1.48 / 0.49	1.73 / 0.50	1.40 / 0.53	1.49 / 0.38
Social Stimulation	1.62 / 0.53	1.42 / 0.40	1.63 / 0.43	1.40 / 0.42	1.63 / 0.48	1.43 / 0.47	1.27 / 0.28	1.42 / 0.41	1.32 / 0.21	1.52 / 0.34	1.67 / 0.43	1.40 / 0.38
Professional Advancement	3.18 / 0.33	3.09 / 0.40	3.01 / 0.54	3.19 / 0.34	2.96 / 0.42	3.09 / 0.51	3.10 / 0.28	3.06 / 0.46	3.17 / 0.38	3.14 / 0.49	2.38 / 0.40	3.43 / 0.33
Community Service	1.97 / 0.61	1.86 / 0.70	2.47 / 0.63	2.25 / 0.59	2.06 / 0.60	1.93 / 0.79	2.00 / 0.58	2.41 / 0.87	1.60 / 0.38	2.26 / 0.67	2.05 / 0.82	2.12 / 0.54
External Expectations	1.96 / 0.51	1.72 / 0.61	1.78 / 0.68	1.82 / 0.67	1.57 / 0.58	1.80 / 0.70	2.10 / 0.69	1.67 / 0.47	2.05 / 0.59	1.74 / 0.50	1.15 / 0.08	2.08 / 0.69
Cognitive Interest	2.40 / 0.59	2.36 / 0.76	2.61 / 0.61	2.14 / 0.70	2.77 / 0.87	2.29 / 0.80	2.89 / 0.30	2.62 / 0.86	2.07 / 1.00	2.82 / 0.69	2.20 / 1.00	2.46 / 0.68

G1 = Adult Education Graduates. G2 = Vocational Education Graduates.
M = Mean. SD = Standard Deviation.
* = Scale values: No Influence = 1; Little Influence = 2; Moderate Influence = 3; Much Influence = 4.

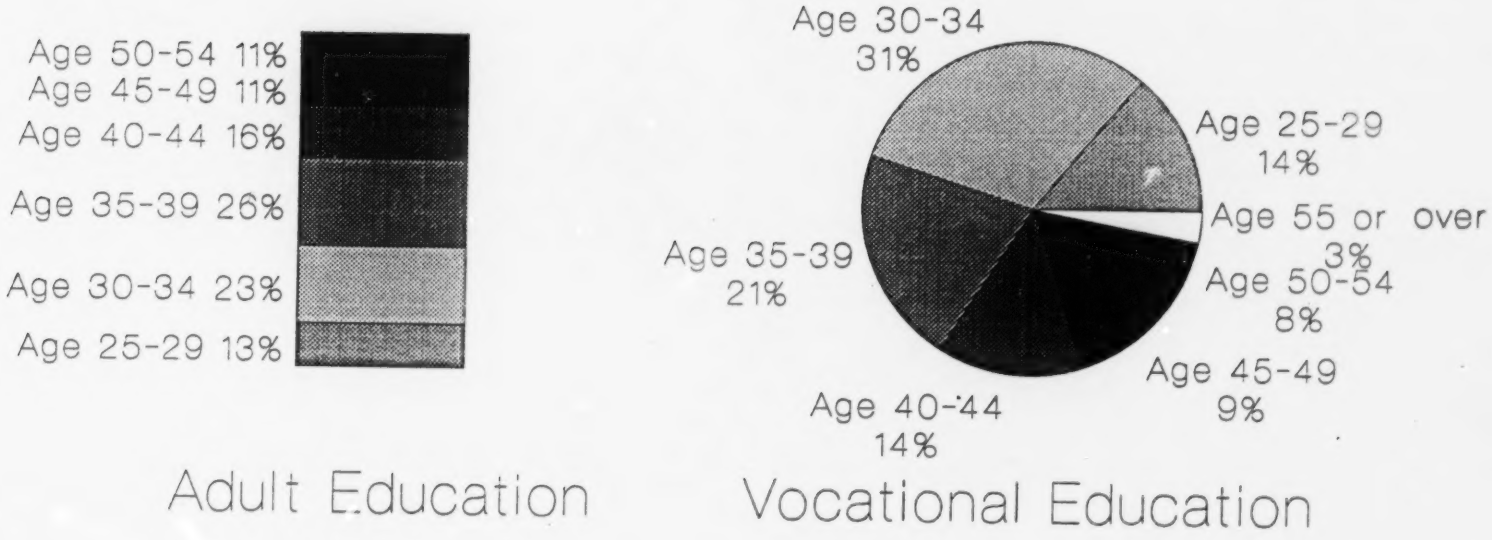

Figure 2. **Age at which degree was completed by adult and vocational education graduates.**

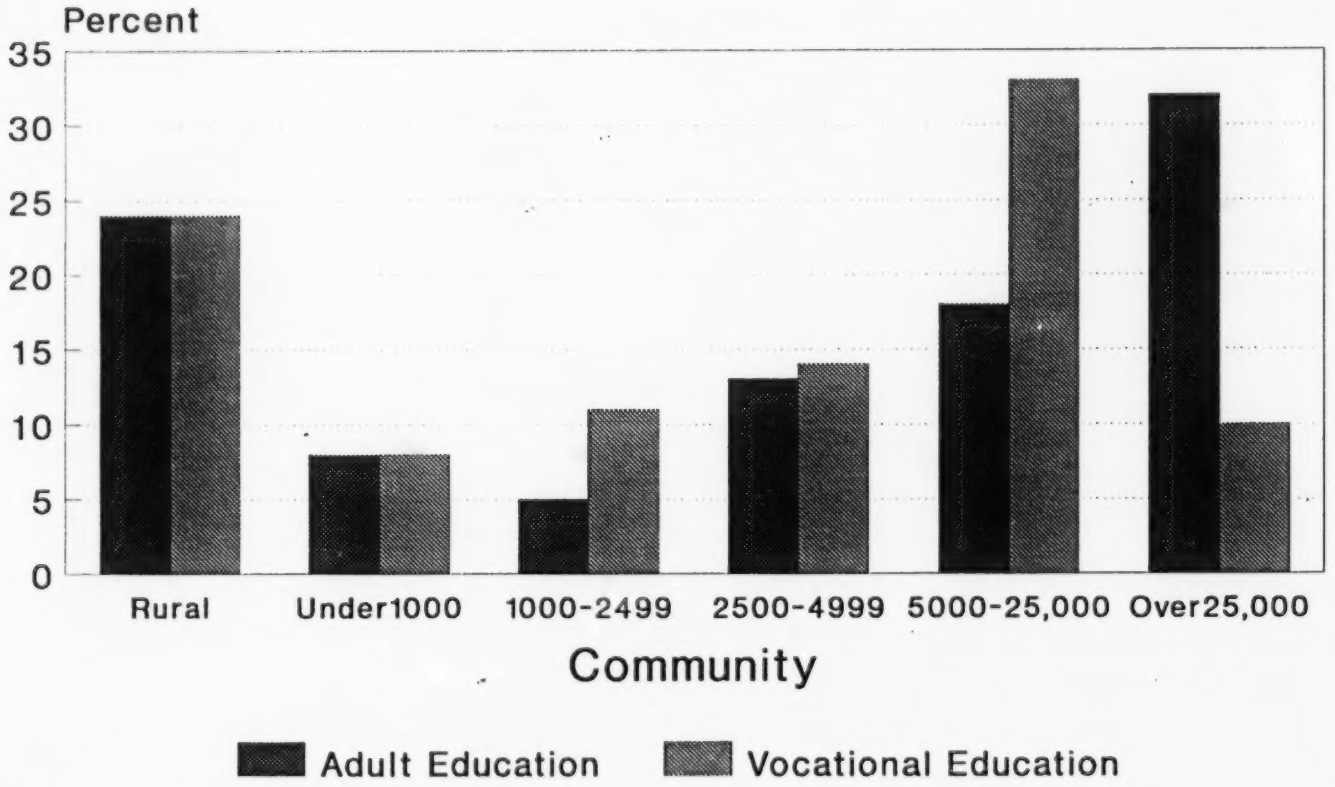

Figure 1. Community distribution of adult and vocational education graduates.